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Reagan undecided on SDI timetable, Shultz tells Senate

By Jennifer Spevacek
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Secretary of State George Shultz told a Senate panel yesterday that it is too early for President Reagan to make a decision on early deployment of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Mr. Shultz, who earlier in the day attended a meeting with President Reagan to discuss SDI, said more research on the proposed missile defense system is needed before the president makes a final decision.

"At what point there will be the material in hand to make a decision ... I don't know the answer," Mr. Shultz said. "It is not in hand right now."

Mr. Shultz also said deployment of the so-called "star wars" program might require renegotiation or withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Deployment would not necessarily violate the treaty with the Soviet Union banning the development of anti-missile defense systems, Mr. Shultz said, if the accord is viewed with a "broad interpretation."

The administration position since 1985 is that a broad interpretation does not bar the use of some advanced technology that did not exist when the treaty was signed.

However, the administration has continued to comply with the "narrow interpretation" of the treaty. Mr. Shultz said the treaty allows either side to withdraw from the agreement after giving six months notice.

The agreement allows both sides to deploy one anti-ballistic missile site to intercept and destroy strategic missiles during flight, but it limits development of ABM weaponry, including radar and intercepting missiles.

The secretary said the basic criteria for SDI deployment — that it would work and could not be overwhelmed by a massive attack — have not yet been met.

"The question of deployment has to be governed by the content of the program," Mr. Shultz said. "You keep the options open for a future president to make that decision."

Mr. Reagan yesterday met with Mr. Shultz, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and other advisers to discuss rapid deployment of an

early phase of the ground- and space-based missile defense system.

Suggestions last month by Mr. Weinberger of early deployment have intensified the administration debate over SDI.

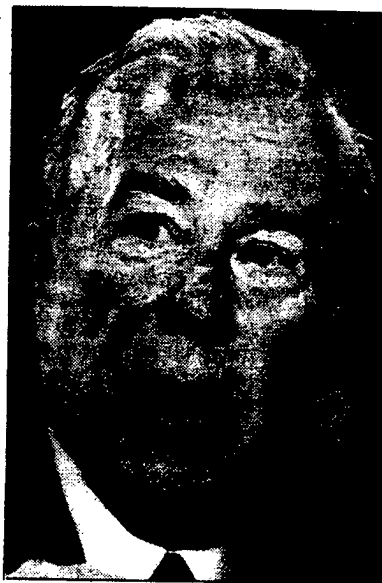
Yesterday's White House meeting also included Robert Gates, named Monday as the new CIA director; chief arms adviser Kenneth Adelman; Vice President George Bush; and Adm. William Crowe, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Of the disagreement between Mr. Shultz and Mr. Weinberger over early deployment, the secretary of state said, "The differences between us are usually exaggerated."

Mr. Shultz repeatedly declined to discuss his advice to the president on SDI. "When he decides whatever he decides, he'll announce that," Mr. Shultz said.

In terms of its effect on the Soviet Union's arms-control negotiating position, "SDI has already been deployed," Mr. Shultz said. "They appear quite anxious to get us to accept things that would cripple the program."

Under sharp questioning from



George Shultz

several senators, Mr. Shultz defended the administration's support for military aid to the Nicaraguan resistance.

Last week, retired Army Gen. Paul Gorman, former commander of U.S. military forces in Central America, told the committee the Nicaraguan resistance forces are poorly organized to seriously challenge the Marxist Sandinista regime.

"Anything he says has to be taken very seriously, [but] he's not the pope, so it isn't necessarily definitive," Mr. Shultz said. "We have to stick with it and we have to stick with him."